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SUBJECT: GOI BRIEFING: ARMS MANAGEMENT IN NEPAL MUST BE COMPLETE, CREDIBLE AND QUICK

Classified By: DCM Geoffrey Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shiva Shankar Mukherjee presided over a November 28 briefing of the New Delhi diplomatic corps, with International Organizations Additional Secretary K.C. Singh also in attendance, to stress the need for speed in getting a team of UN monitors to observe the arms management process in Nepal, which Mukherjee said must be complete and credible before the interim government could be put into place. He predicted the December 1 deadline for establishing an interim government will be missed, causing the Maoists to cry betrayal. Mukherjee asked that countries who had been requested to send monitors inform the UN as soon as possible that they are ready and willing to do so, noting that India was unwilling to send too many given the "close relationship" of the two countries, but would send monitors to other nations to free up others to come to Nepal. A UN mandate for monitors is expected "within a few days," he said. Mukherjee warned against delays, noting the dangers that lie with the Maoists, the King, the army and the police.

After months of seeming introspection, India is clearly moving ahead quickly in Nepal and expects others to do so, too. India has also overcome most of its doubts about UN involvement, and sees a window of opportunity that must not be missed to make the peace accord stick. In a November 29 meeting with visiting Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky (septel), Foreign Secretary Menon emphasized the GOI desire to coordinate closely with the U.S. to strengthen democratic institutions in Nepal. END SUMMARY.

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The Need for Speed is Paramount  
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¶2. (C) Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shiva Shankar Mukherjee stressed to the involved diplomatic corps in Delhi that the commencement of arms management is key, and the need for speed in completing it is paramount. In a November 28 briefing, he emphasized that "The fluid situation in Nepal can slide back if momentum is not carried on," continuing that he hoped he had conveyed a sense of urgency to the participants. He underlined that Nepal has an opportunity that must not be lost, observing "Nepal is enjoying the goodwill of the entire world at the moment. We would like to take it to fruition." Mukherjee noted that arms management must spread throughout the country, and not be concentrated only in the Kathmandu valley.

¶3. (C) Concerning a UN mandate for monitors, one diplomat asked Mukherjee if the GOI requires a UN resolution, or if it would be willing to accept any other form of mandate. Mukherjee replied that the GOI is "comfortable with any method adopted as long as it is the quickest and most practical." The UN SYG wrote to the UNSC President before November 21 to request a mandate for UN monitors, according to Mukherjee, and he expects a reply to come within a few days. He noted that it should be a "specific, time-bound mandate," and not a "ruling mandate." "A 'blue-helmet mandate' would demoralize," he opined.

¶4. (C) After the UNSC responds to the UN SYG, the UN will

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send a CONOPS (Concept of Operations) team to perform an "assessment mission," which Mukherjee noted "should have been there yesterday, but will probably take about four weeks to arrive. We hope it will come urgently." The GOI feels this advance team is unnecessary, according to Mukherjee, but the UN will complete this step before it sends a team of monitors. The advance team will have 35-40 members, and will be followed by a 130-150 total member team of arms management monitors, said Mukherjee, noting "we will urge the UN to have more for the election." The monitors should be in civilian clothes, not uniforms, argued Mukherjee, noting that each country had been asked to provide one Lieutenant Colonel and five majors. When asked if the advance team would be considered enough to certify that the Maoists are separated from their arms, Mukherjee stated that it would be up to the UN to decide if it needed to wait for the larger team to make that assessment. Questioned whether monitors would be able to start tomorrow if they were deployed, Mukherjee answered that monitoring could begin after a few days of briefings. In addition to the monitoring of arms, there are groups among the Maoists that would need to be separated, remarked Mukherjee. "The Maoists are reportedly padding their numbers with new recruits, and there are children in their ranks, both groups of which would need to be weeded out."

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Indian Intentions on the Provision of UN Monitors  
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¶5. (C) Regarding Indian intentions on monitor provision, Mukherjee acknowledged that Nepal and India have "too close of a relationship," and said it would be "easily misinterpreted if there were a large amount of (Indian) monitors. We don't want to give anyone the opportunity to criticize." He offered that the GOI would be willing to replace peacekeepers in other parts of the world in order to free up monitors for Nepal. The Chinese Ambassador remarked that he also wondered if China should send monitors, given the proximity and close relationship of the two countries.

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No Interim Government Until Arms Management is Complete and

¶6. (C) Mukherjee warned that arms management must be complete and credible before an interim government is formed. He articulated that this would not happen a few days from now, and the interim government deadline of December 1 will be missed. He predicted that the Maoists will put pressure on the Seven Party Alliance to form the interim government before completing the task of arms management, and that, if and/or when refused, the Maoists will "scream betrayal."

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Elections Can Be "Reasonably Fair"

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¶7. (C) Turning to the monitoring of elections, Mukherjee theorized that, while he doubts the election process can be one-hundred percent "free and fair," it can be "reasonably

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fair." He reiterated the need for speed, stating that "no one wants the May/June deadline for elections to be transgressed," noting that the monsoon season, followed by the festival season would mean that elections would be delayed until November if they aren't held in May or June. He declared that many election monitors would be required, not because the Nepalese are unable to hold the election themselves, but because they are in a "weakened, injured" state right now. Foreign Secretary Menon echoed this line of analysis in a November 29 meeting with Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky (septel), arguing for close U.S.-India cooperation to build Nepal's democratic institutions and describing an "institutional vacuum" in areas relevant to Nepalese democracy. "People will be scared and intimidated by the Maoist militia," commented Mukherjee, adding that they have been conditioned to be scared of the Maoists.

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Where Does the Danger of Delays Really Lie?

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¶8. (C) The Brazilian Ambassador asked Mukherjee if the danger of delays (of monitors, elections, etc.) was limited to the Maoists, or were there other factors to fear? Mukherjee responded that the dangers are three-fold. One, the Maoists' commitment is suspect. They have continued to carry on "unacceptable things" when they said that they would not do. Two, the king is still around and is still a factor to be weighed. And three, the Nepalese National Army and the police are "looked upon with suspicion." Their morale must be raised, he said, adding that police stations all over the country are defunct and destroyed, and though they are supposed to be loyal to the state, they are a demoralized force. "In the past," he said, "the police were told not to provoke the Maoists until the peace accord is signed." Now that it has been signed, the situation must be reversed, asserted Mukherjee.

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Comment: The Elephant Starts to Move

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¶9. (C) This meeting was a refreshingly frank and uncommonly open discussion by the MEA of Indian thinking on Nepal. The mere fact that a briefing for the diplomatic corps was held shows that the GOI is concerned that progress in the peace process could backslide. India's desire for the UN to move quickly and for countries to send monitors as soon as possible is a sign that the GOI does not have complete confidence in the Maoists to do their part, and that it views the peace accord as tenuous. The diplomatic corps in New Delhi appeared to be of one mind on the urgency of the situation, although only Norway stated that it would be sending monitors and that its monitors are ready to go now. India has clearly decided to move quickly, acting in concert

with the international community. It has overcome its doubts about UN assistance in doing so. The MEA clearly sees a window of opportunity in Nepal and does not want to lose this chance to forge a lasting peace. END COMMENT.

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